

Kansas To Begin Using HIV Rapid Testing July 1

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) will be incorporating HIV rapid testing into its HIV Prevention interventions starting July 1. The HIV/STD program awarded seven sites with “enhanced” HIV testing grants (2-Kansas City, 3- Wichita, 1-Topeka, and 1-Garden City).

This change provides an innovative HIV test, in addition to standard testing procedures, that allows for preliminary test results in as little as twenty minutes.

“The incorporation of HIV rapid testing is not designed to supplant existing testing technology but to enhance HIV testing efforts by more closely linking HIV testing with HIV prevention interventions and Ryan White case management activities,” said Karl Milhon, Director for the KDHE HIV/STD Section. “The program will continue to utilize traditional blood based EIA/Western Blot technology through its health department based HIV testing infrastructure. The program will also continue to use the oral OraSure® test linked with Prevention.”

KDHE is working closely with the KDHE Division of Health and Environmental Laboratories to ensure that the program meets Clinical Laboratory Information Act (CLIA) requirements associated with the use of the FDA approved and waived HIV rapid test OraQuick®

“The department’s multi-step approach will allow the program to continue to provide HIV testing access within 75 miles of all Kansas citizens and enable our programs to take testing technology to the populations at risk in association with outreach prevention and other activities such as testing partners to positive people already in care,” Milhon noted. “The advantage of taking testing to populations at risk for contracting HIV is that we can better find disease.”

Everyone engaging in risky behavior for HIV infection is encouraged to be tested in a physician’s office, local health department, or community-based organization that provides HIV testing. According to the CDC there are between 850,000 and 950,000 Americans now living with HIV/AIDS, yet between 180,000 to 280,000 are unaware of their HIV infection.

For the last three years Kansas accounted for roughly 0.5 percent of the HIV/AIDS cases reported nationally. It is estimated there are between 900 and 1,400 people living in Kansas that are unaware of their HIV infection. Also of additional concern is the number of HIV infected patients who are waiting to be tested until serious illness raises their concern for infection.

At the end of 2002, 931 individuals were presumed to be living in Kansas and infected with HIV and 1,003 individuals in Kansas had AIDS, according to the Reportable Infection Diseases 2002 Summary. Of the 931 HIV cases, 82 were new HIV cases in

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2002, and of the 1,003 AIDS cases, 55 were new in 2002.

From January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2003 over 80 percent (554) of HIV cases diagnosed in Kansas converted to AIDS within twelve months of being diagnosed with HIV. This compares to 39 percent of the cases diagnosed in 2001 for thirty areas around the country as reported in the CDC's 2002 HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report.

The KDHE HIV/STD section has taken steps to improve testing procedures in the state in advance of HIV rapid testing. In May 2000, the program integrated oral testing for HIV with HIV Prevention and Ryan White Case Management. That program has maintained an HIV positivity rate above one percent as of December 31, 2003. This compares with the traditional HIV testing program based in clinic settings of below .3 percent.

Contractors utilizing the oral testing have been able to illustrate that taking testing to the populations at risk can help public health find disease. Approximately one third of the positives from this program have been partners to people already in care. The rest of the positives have represented either prevention linked testing or testing associated with partner counseling and referral services (PCRS).

"The incorporation of rapid testing will hopefully further improve the program's ability to find HIV disease and refer people into Partner Counseling and Referral Services and clinical care services including Ryan White case management, thereby reducing the reservoir of disease in Kansas," Milhon noted.

People who are at risk for HIV can get tested at one of more than 80 sites in the state or by contacting our regional HIV Prevention and Case Management contractors. Contact your local health department, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment HIV/STD Section at 785-296-6174 or information on public testing sites can be accessed through our Web site at <http://www.kdhe.state.ks.us/hiv-std/> or by calling 785-296-6173. A downloadable statewide HIV/STD resource guide can also be accessed through the Web site.